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excerpt

► It has never been a secret that some American reporters working abroad maintain symbiotic relationships with the Central Intelligence Agency. In the shared quest for fresh information, correspondents and CIA agents have been known to swap tips to their mutual benefit. Recently, the Washington *Star-News* revealed that some 40 U.S. journalists—mostly freelance writers and “stringers” who work part-time for one or more employers—have been on the CIA payroll as undercover informants. Some are full-time agents using journalism as a cover. Only five of the 40 were said to be regular staffers for large news organizations. Still, the news raised eyebrows and caused some editors to wonder if that odd stringer who contributes occasional stories from spook-crowded environs like the Caribbean and Eastern Europe might be accepting more than news tips from the CIA. The agency, of course, named no names. But in response to questions, the CIA assured the *Star-News*, New York *Times* and *TIME*, among others, that their correspondents were not involved.